

Nadler Calls for Federal Investigation of EPA's Dangerous Neglect and Lies Following 9/11

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EPA Inspector General Report Cites White House's Instructions to Issue Inaccurate Health Reassurances

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) today called for a Congressional investigation into the White House's role in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) public statements about health concerns caused by World Trade Center contaminants following the attacks of September 11 and the EPA's delay and neglect in initiating a proper clean-up plan of WTC dust. He also demanded a proper clean-up plan finally be implemented by EPA so residents and workers in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn are not slowly poisoned by residual contaminants.

The White House's instructions to EPA on to downplay air quality concerns after 9/11 was revealed in a report released last night by the EPA's Inspector General. Despite evidence that deadly contaminants were contained in WTC debris, the EPA lied about health concerns and refused to initiate a clean-up plan, according to the IG's report.

"The Department of Justice must investigate EPA's response to the clean-up of World Trade Center debris after September 11. There are many revelations in the IG's report that are extremely troubling. That the White House instructed EPA officials to downplay the health impact of the World Trade Center contaminants due to 'competing considerations' at the expense of the health and lives of New York City residents is an abomination.

"The report states that the EPA could have taken a more proactive approach regarding indoor air clean-up, something I and others said from the beginning. Instead, the EPA turned a deaf ear to our pleas and passed responsibility for the clean-up to the City, which was overburdened by the fallout of the attacks and had neither the expertise nor the resources to deal with an emergency of that scale. White House and EPA officials have blood on their hands because of their continuing failure -- to this day -- to implement a proper clean-up for toxic contaminants.

Nadler first requested that EPA clean up buildings contaminated by WTC debris shortly after the September 11 attacks. To confirm the effects of the debris, Nadler initiated an investigation of the EPA's response in January 2002 and issued a White Paper documenting the federal environmental agency's wrongdoing in April 2002. A full eight months following the terrorist attacks, the EPA announced a limited clean-up plan for residences south of Canal Street. Now the EPA's own IG has essentially corroborated the accuracy of the allegations and conclusions of the Nadler White Paper.

As stated in the IG's report, "Because asbestos is a carcinogen with no commonly accepted safe level of exposure, and approximately 18,000 residential units in Lower Manhattan have not been tested or cleaned through the indoor residential program, we continue to believe our recommendations are warranted to assure adequate health protection for residents in Lower Manhattan."

Nadler said, "I call on the EPA to take immediate action to implement the recommendations of the IG and specifically, to collect and analyze indoor samples for contaminants and to implement a comprehensive clean-up plan with the following criteria,":

- Protect the health of people by ensuring that the new clean-up meets Superfund regulations and guidelines;
- Contaminated buildings must be treated as a system. The EPA's practice of selectively cleaning individual apartments does not ensure that cleaned apartments will not be re-contaminated by uncleared apartments through the HVAC

system;

- Employ aggressive sampling methods rather than the useless passive sampling methods the EPA has employed to ascertain levels of asbestos and other contaminants;

- Include work spaces and schools as well as residential buildings in the cleanup. Currently, EPA has refused to test any spaces other than residences; and

- Include all geographic locations impacted by the WTC dust in the clean-up effort. EPA's decision to clean residences only south of Canal Street in Manhattan neglects the need for clean-up in locations that were under the dust cloud, including the Lower East Side, Chinatown, and parts of Brooklyn. AS the IG report noted, "the area of the cleanup should be determined by 'collecting and analyzing samples starting at Ground Zero and radiating outward in concentric circles until the boundary of WTC contamination [is] determined.'"

"After two years of calling on the EPA to do its job, we now have additional confirmation that the agency's dangerous neglect and the White House's instructions will continue to threaten the lives of New Yorkers. It is time to put an end to this and to get to the bottom of why New Yorkers' lives and health appear to be deemed expendable by the White House and EPA," said Nadler.

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